

News release

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WEST MIDLANDS MUSEUM PARTNERSHIP WINS £1MILLION FROM THE ART FUND



The Art Fund, the UK's leading independent art charity, has today announced that **Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery** and **The New Art Gallery Walsall** in partnership with **Ikon** have been awarded £1million. The money will fund the creation of a collection of international contemporary art through the charity's new scheme **Art Fund International**.

This is one of the most important and ambitious schemes The Art Fund has ever launched and aims to encourage a radical change in the scale and ambition of contemporary art collecting in the UK. The West Midlands was one of five partnerships that each won £1million.

David Barrie, Director of The Art Fund, said:

"We were stunned by the amazing response to the initiative, particularly by the enthusiasm and ideas generated by the museums working in partnership with contemporary art organisations.

"The vision and ability of the five winners was particularly impressive - now comes the exciting task of acquiring and commissioning work to make their ideas a reality. These are the spaces to watch as we begin to realise the enormous ambition of developing international contemporary art collections around the country."

Stephen Snoddy, Director of The New Art Gallery Walsall, said:

"The New Art Gallery Walsall and Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery in partnership with Ikon, Birmingham are delighted to receive a share of £5 million that The Art Fund are committing to develop regional collections of international contemporary art in the UK. This initiative will mean the West Midlands will benefit by audiences being able to access a more diverse range of works by international artists which will enhance and complement our existing collections, providing a lasting legacy for future generations to enjoy."

We are an independent charity committed to saving art for everyone to enjoy. Since we began in 1903, we have helped to save over 850,000 works of art. Today, some 80,000 members fund our work. In return, they receive free or reduced-price admission to many museums and galleries in the UK. This is not the only reason they join: they support us because they love art.

The West Midlands partnership's ambition to use the collection formed with Art Fund International as a launch pad to create a new museum of contemporary art in Birmingham is extremely exciting, and fully supported by The Art Fund.

The theme of the West Midlands collection will be 'The Metropolis – reflections of modern urban life'. It will explore the diversity, dynamism and growth of the city through an international collection of art that focuses on how the city represents a powerful shifting strand of contemporary culture.

The scheme emerged from discussions during the planning of The Art Fund's centenary exhibition and international conference in 2003. These brought into sharp focus the historic failure of UK museums to acquire art produced by living, non-British artists. The situation is little better today. In the last twenty years, Art Fund grants offered towards the acquisition of contemporary artworks amounted to only 17% of its total grants, and of the contemporary grants made almost 83% went towards works by British artists.

The Art Fund International application process required museums to form partnerships with contemporary art organisations for the first time. These partnerships worked together to bid for funds to buy works of art outright in line with a specified collecting theme. A total of 29 applications were received from all over the UK, involving nearly 90 organisations. Ten of these were selected to make full proposals, from which today's five winners have been chosen. The £1million will be allocated to specific purchases and commissions over the next five years.

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Notes to editors:

- For further information please contact:
Hannah Fox, Head of Press - hfox@artfund.org or 020 7225 4820
Lorna Gemmell, Senior Press Officer - lgemmell@artfund.org or 020 7225 4822.
- The five winning partnerships are:
Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives in partnership with **Arnolfini Gallery of Modern Art**, Glasgow in partnership with **The Common Guild**;
Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (mima) in partnership with **The Drawing Centre, New York**; **Towner Art Gallery**, Eastbourne in

partnership with **Photoworks, Brighton Photo Biennial** and **Artsway**;
West Midlands partnership: Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and
New Art Gallery Walsall in partnership with **Ikon**

- The selection of the winning proposals was made by The Art Fund International Committee. The committee comprises five members of The Art Fund's Board: Professor Lord Renfrew (Chair); Professor Michael Craig Martin; Dr David Landau; Dr Deborah Swallow and Felicity Waley-Cohen and four external members with extensive international curatorial expertise: Catherine Lampert, former Director, Whitechapel; James Lingwood, co-Director, ArtAngel; Hans Ulrich Obrist, co-director of Exhibitions and Programmes and Director of International Projects, The Serpentine and Ralph Rugoff, Director, Hayward Gallery.
- The Art Fund is the UK's leading independent art charity. It offers grants to help UK museums and galleries enrich their collections and campaigns widely on behalf of museums and their visitors. It is entirely funded from public donations and has 80,000 members. Since 1903 the charity has helped museums and galleries all over the UK secure 860,000 works of art for their collections.
- In January 2007 The Art Fund successfully led the public appeal to save JMW Turner's *Blue Rigi* for Tate, and in July 2007 was instrumental in putting together a unique funding package to ensure Dumfries House in Ayrshire was secured for the nation.
- Independent of government, The Art Fund is uniquely placed to campaign on behalf of public collections across the UK.
- Visit the charity's website at www.artfund.org